

HARRISBURG AREA TIMEX SINCLAIR USERS GROUP NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 1989

Our last meeting was held on November 10th. Attending were Doug Harter, Paul Wilding and myself. Doug had his 2068. Paul brought his Z88 and I brought my QL and my Z88. Paul copied a Z88 Communications program from my Eprom and we tested out a Z88 - Z88 cable that I made. We sent a few programs from my Z88 to Paul's using the cable. The Z88 was discussed as well as some discussion of programming with Doug.

NEXT MEETING

FRIDAY DECEMBER 8TH

CAMP HILL MALL COMMUNITY ROOM

6:30 TO 9:30 PM

There was a suggestion on meeting in each others homes and having each meeting geared to what ever the host does with computers. This sounds like a good idea to me. We could meet in the Community Room again after we have visited all the volunteer hosts computer rooms. We can discuss this at the December 8th meeting. I have to make reservations for the Community Room in December so let me know what you think about this.

Here are some other upcoming events: Sunday December 3rd:

The Delaware Computer Fair will take place at the Nur Temple on Route 13, south of I-295. The show is open to the public from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and admission is \$4.

The CATS group will be having their Annual Christmas gift exchange on the 9th. Ed and I are planning to go. So let us know if you want to go.

The Supersol program in the last issue was not an original program by Joan Kealy. It was an inoperable program on which Joan programmed the bugs out. Joan originally found the program in the Cleveland TSUG tape Library.

I have sold most of my 2068 gear to one of our members. I may have one or two items left. I am also in the process of selling all my TS 1000 items.

Therefore any 1000 and 2068 submissions to the Newsletter must be on paper. Both 2040 and full size printouts will be accepted. Make sure the 2040 printouts are not faded. Either send them to me immediately after printing or store them in a cool dry place. Hand written submissions will not be accepted.

I sold my 2068 items to Ken Crack. Therefore Ken is also the new 2068 tape and Aerco Disk Librarian. Please send any public domain 2068 programs to Ken. His address is: P.O. Box 1142, Mt. Pleasant, PA 15666.

I am going to continue using the QL and the Z88. I think that they complement each other nicely. The Newsletter is mostly written and printed out directly from the Z88. I will sometimes do some writing on the QL and then port it over to the Z88 to be formatted and printed. A lot of people have bought Z88s as notetaking devices and then port text over to their desktop machines. But I am using my Z88 in the opposite way.

Here is the Z88 to Z88 cable that I came up with. This should be useful in transferring files from one Z88 to another. I am using Z88COM but it should also work with Z-TERM and Import-Export.

Z88	Z88
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2 -----	3
3 -----	2
4 -----	4
5 -----	5
7 -----	7
8 -----	9
9 -----	8

Dave Bennett 329 Walton St. (Rear)
Lemoyne, PA 17043 717-774-7531

S. M. U. G. presents
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NEXT SHOW : Jan. 6 & Jan. 7 (2-days) at George Washington
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An Open Letter to All Interested Parties of S.N.U.G.
(Fall 1989)

Dear Friends,

During the past few months I have heard some very detrimental words concerning SNUG, and its leaders. I would like to address that issue now. This is intended as an explanation of the facts, not as an excuse.

When the discussions of the formation of a multi-national organization were begun, one of the most prominent things mentioned was the fact that the organization would facilitate the interchange of information. We were not going to be closed minded about our efforts and wanted to actively accept input from anyone interested enough to contact us.

Of the above ideas, some were successful, some were not. As the lawyers once put it - not only must justice be done, but it must be SEEN to be done. I believe that a lot of the problem is not in our efforts. It is the ability to communicate to you our efforts. I hope that by now that there isn't anyone who can doubt that the efforts put forth so far are sincere. We are geared toward the maintainance and betterment of the Sinclair community through information.

We made some tentative efforts by dealing with an established publication, who offered us the entire magazine "lock, stock, and barrel". It was a major decision which prompted a cross-country phone conference. At first we thought we could pull it off. However, the responsibility of neophyte publishers to provide a quality 50+ page magazine that had a standard that had already been established, was one of the major reasons that we had second thoughts. In addition, there were other complications and the negotiations were discontinued.

In addition there were personnel problems. Volunteers to accept the responsibility of putting together a quality publication were few and far between. Certain individuals took advantage of new personal business relationships and profited monetarily from them. They also saddled certain leadership with bills that were not their responsibility. In no way has any membership money been used at all. Start up monies has been from out of pocket expenses.

We had attempted to make a newsletter available for the CATS Fest in Washington, but again the volunteers ran into time constraints that prevented us from our goals. So far there have been a total of four members that have attempted some sort of publication in one format or another.

The idea of this publication was to be our communication line to you. Hopefully it would also provide the platform necessary to you, the user, to get the information you needed. There are those among our critics that have stated that we have needed to provide our infomation on Electronic Bulletin Boards. We have determined that not all Sinclairists have access to or want to get involved in modeming. Although there are many, many

advantages to such a system, we would like to look at that item as an ADJUNCT to publication. And I believe that at this point our priority is to get something, ANYTHING out.

This brings up a important point. I feel it extremely necessary to have a QUALITY publication. For a long time, we put a great deal of effort into not what the publication would look like, but what its content would be. The first criteria was we would attempt NOT to reprint other publications' articles to fill space. Unfortunately, there is a great burden placed on the users groups to provide fresh material. And when the deadline approaches, and there is nothing new to print, an alternative was to incorporate previously published articles. Some of these articles would not have been read by all the membership, and the spread of information would then be accomplished. However, if no new articles were at hand, the editor (who really started doing this for probably the same reasons we started SNUG; i.e. no one else was doing it) felt the pressure to at least come up "with something", and wrote a small article. And so the spread of Sinclair information goes on.

We would like to present to you all new information. That requires some of your assistance. Mathematically, the odds of one or two individuals producing interesting to read articles all the time tends to break down over a period of time. The "guru" of say modeming may get burned out from supplying info and long for the release of the burden of pressure to produce. This is the transitional year - 1989. Many of our once prominent software writers, publishers, hardware hackers have felt the all too familiar problem of "I'm not getting any return for all the effort being put into this". The return can be financial, acknowledgement of effort, or for that matter just plain old communications. So for one reason or another they have dropped out as interested parties.

The following few thoughts are as disturbing to me as they hopefully will be thought provoking to you. I have always thought of the average Sinclairist as someone who wants to get the most for his/(hopefully) her dollar as possible. They have seen the elegance and power of their systems, and are maverick and possibly defiant enough to say with pride that we can do whatever the "Big Boys" can; maybe not as quickly, but enough to be impressed with the results. I can say without reserve that the people in our community impress me with the drive to

squeeze that last ounce of power out of what once was referred to as a "toy" and a "doorstop". However, as a whole, there has been in the past a sense of complacency - let someone else do it; I only use programs, I don't know how to program; I really only want to play games. The pioneering leaders, all of who should be congratulated for perseverance, managed to overcome these attitudes during the early years and still provide what was needed and wanted. I sense a degree of urgency in our efforts. There is a tendency to fade off into never-never land in the electronic age. A recent article depicted a museums' difficulty in obtaining examples of coin operated video arcade games from only FIVE short years ago - these "classics" were considered antiques. I tend to see things in seven year cycles (borrowed from the automotive industry). Is it in the realm of possibility that there won't be but a handful (read that as less than 2-300) of Sinclairists in the North American continent in

the next year or two? And why is it that other "orphans of the storm" can survive and florish while we allow ourselves to diminish all the fine efforts of those who chose to have the "power within our Grasp"? I am not one to be a doomsayer, but this is a case of waking up the sleeping giant and causing some reaction, and hopefully we will see some action. These statements hopefully will get some of us to think. There are those who have harsh words for this organization. In some manner there are those who feel they can provide a service that currently we cannot. However, the thing that is in deference to us all, is if we squander our precious resources (time, money, and effort) trying to put down or belittle someone else's efforts, in this matter we all lose. I would like to propose that if we could drop the animosities and work towards the betterment of the community at large then we all gain from it.

So what does that require of you, the member? As the robot from "Short Circuit" is so fond of saying "...Ahh, INPUT!!". We need an organized effort from you the readership, be you a member or not. We need RELIABLE volunteers who are willing to accept an assignment, and its responsibilities. We have a massive need to build an effective WORKING organization. We desperately need people to help with the Charter (so we can obtain Tax Exemption Status); an Election Committee to prevent the same problems we had in our first election; people who are willing to help organize our Software library-Hardware library-Literature library-Database of members, equipment, contacts-Typists willing to help translate some of our published material to electronic format for its preservation- Representatives to contact former software & hardware houses to release their materials into to public domain. As you can see, the goals are large and the effort much. However, if we can get a LOT OF YOU to assist, the individual effort will be small. So can you spare an hour or two to help the group who wants to help you enjoy your hobby for a long time to come? Think about it.

In reference to the previously mentioned explanation, I would ask your indulgence in allowing to relate to you what has happened in the few short months since you last heard from me. I do this because there have been things said that at least some information (good or bad) is better than none at all. As with most people life has its ups and downs. My life has had more downs than ups. My wife and I have been trying to adopt a baby for almost 19 months now. It has been a very trying time of waiting and waiting. During this timeframe, I have tried to make my management at work aware of the marvels of the Cambridge 288. For those of you who do not know, I work as a Paramedic for Medic One Ambulance Service, the single largest private Advanced Life Support service in the United States. We are going to have computer generated Patient Run Reports for the field personnel. A laptop computer will be used for these reports. I had worked hard and developed a very detailed (24 page) proposal to convince the powers that be that the 288 could do the job adequately and elegantly, and with power to spare. For the most part I was successful, until I encountered the political bean counters. I had not convinced them that anything but MS-DOS was capable of handling the job, even as they agreed with me that they would not need all the power and features of a IBM compatable. It really became a question of not bucking the system and how much political clout I had. Not being a terribly

critical animal, I lost out on the proposal. Back at the home, we finally heard that we were going to have a home study for the adoption. Frenzied activity began as we prepared for inspection. The visit went without a hitch. We were advised we were approved, and the baby would be coming as soon as the end of August. The joy was short lived. Maggie, my wife, is a brittle diabetic who has been coming closer and closer to going on hemo-dialysis. The stress of the preparations was too much. The night of the acceptance, Maggie went into congestive heart failure, and had to be hospitalized. Her kidneys had finally failed and she was to be put on dialysis immediately. To make a long story short, she has had multiple surgeries and we are still trying to get to some sort of normalcy. She is currently home, but there has been a dramatic change in life style.

Again, I am not relating this to you all for sympathy, but to give you an idea why you may not have gotten a reply to your many inquiries. Just to let you know, the brief mention we got in the Sinclair column of Computer Shopper, "MORE TIMEX SINCLAIR", by Michael O'Brien has garnered as much attention as anything SNUG has ever been involved in. We had received as many as three letters or calls a day for the entire month of June. So the backlog of replies is very high. With this letter I hope to inform you of the reasons for the delay.

We have gotten together the knowledgeable and capable team of Basil Wentworth and Paul Holgrem to work the newsletter into shape. I understand that they currently have three months of material ready to use. However, the well runs dry quickly and your input is needed to tide them over. I also have heard that Frank Davis has completed inventory on the Public Domain software and is currently doing capsule reviews on ALL of them, which accounts for the length of time to get it together. Thank you Basil, Paul, and Frank for all your hard work!

I have discussed the next point with several parties and all agree. As the past year has been greatly spent in preparation, and very little (visibly, anyway) has been given back to the members, we will extend the base membership for an additional year to January 1, 1991. This is return for the overwhelming patience the members have shown us.

If any among you feel that we have not lived up to your expectations for the monies sent in, I have directed the Treasurer, John "J.C." Cushran to refund your membership. We hope instead that we will earn your faith in accomplishing the goals that we have outlined to you. With your assistance we can move forward, and grow.



Mel Nathanson

A Look at the new Light Portables Compared To the Z88.

The introduction of the Z88 in late 1987 appears to have started a real revolution in lightweight RAM Disk based portable machines.

The Z88 has a couple chips made by NEC. The Japanese tend to copy Western products such as Cars, VCRs and computers. NEC came out with a 4 pound MSDOS, RAM Disk based machine called the Ultralite. It comes with a CGA compatible screen and plug in RAM and ROM cards. You can buy a 1 Meg or 2 Meg version. This is a very nice machine except that you will pay at least \$2000 for a 1 Meg version and several hundred more for a 2 Meg version. The battery life is only 2 hours. I find that unacceptable. The Z88 has a battery life of 20 hours and sometimes I find that is not enough. Therefore I would not consider the Ultralite.

Two companies just came out with 1 pound MSDOS machines the size of Video cassettes.

One company is Atari. Atari is famous for game machines, a line of 8 bit machines and a line of 16 bit machines. They also make PC compatibles.

Their entry in the Ultra Portable market is called the Portfolio. It sells for \$399.95 or about the same price as a base Z88. It is a 1 pound MSDOS machine with a 40 x 8 character display and keys that look similar to those used on the 2068. I am looking at a two page ad in Popular Science. It comes with 128K RAM and a MSDOS 2.11 compatible operating system. Most MSDOS software requires at least 256K RAM and an 80 x 25 screen. Therefore any MSDOS software will have to be adapted to this machine. You will have to add at least 128K RAM and the screen is too small to run most MSDOS programs. 128K RAM sells for \$199.95. That is about twice the price of a Z88 128K RAM. I feel that Atari would have been better off using a proprietary operating system designed for a smaller

screen like the Z88 or the Tandy 102. Therefore for these reasons I would not consider the Portfolio except for a notetaking machine. I feel that the Z88 would be a better choice than the Portfolio. The Z88 also has a more powerful task switching operating system.

Another company called Poquet also just came out with a 1 pound MSDOS machine. It has 512K of RAM and an 80 x 25 CGA compatible screen. It has a 100 hour battery life using readily available AA cells. It uses plug in RAM and ROM cards in lieu of disk drives. I am real impressed with this machine. I don't see any problem with it except for the price. It will sell for about \$2000. But if you have the bucks, this would be a nice machine to have. The Z88 with 672K RAM sells for less than \$900.

Psion is coming out with two new laptops weighing around 5 pounds. One has a proprietary icon based operating system similar to the Macintosh operating system. The other laptop uses MSDOS. Both machines use RAM, ROM and EEPROM cards in lieu of disk drives. The DOS machine has a list of \$2500. The proprietary machine has a list of \$1500. The Psions look like machines to consider if you are looking for a lightweight laptop.

There are also a few new machines weighing around 6 pounds with traditional disk drives. The new machines are by Tandy, Toshiba, Zenith and Compaq. The Tandy 1100 FD looks interesting for a disk drive based system as it lists for \$999.

Toshiba also has had the T1000 on the market for quite some time and it sells for as little as \$600.

But all in all I am quite happy with my Z88. All I really want is a machine for portable word processing and remote modem communications. I feel that the Z88 handles both tasks quite well.

Harrisburg Area Timex Sinclair Users Group Information and Registration Form

The Harrisburg Area Timex Sinclair Users Group. We were founded in May 1986. We support all sinclair related machines including all Timex and Cambridge models. This includes the sinclair ZX80, ZX81, Spectrum, Spectrum+, and QL. Timex models supported are the TS 1000, TS 1500, and TS 2068. Sinclair no longer has the rights to the 'Sinclair' name. It was sold to Amstrad. But Sir Clive is still producing computers under the Cambridge name. We also support the Cambridge Z88 laptop computer and any future Cambridge computers.

Our meetings are usually held at the Camp Hill Mall Community Room on the second Friday of each month from 6:30 to 9:30 PM. For more information call 774-7531.

Name _____

Street _____ Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number _____

Computer(s) _____

Computer Interests _____

Additional comments _____

Dues are \$10 per year and they include a subscription to our monthly newsletter.

Please send check to:

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Lemoyne, PA 17043